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SIPDIS

FOR EUR/SCE, EUR/PPD, EUR/RPM AND EUR/ERA  
OSD FOR POPOVICH

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#)

SUBJECT: ZAGREB WEEKLY ACTIVITY REPORT - MAY 7, 2009

11. (U) FORMER CROATIAN POLICEMAN SENTENCED TO 8 YEARS IN  
JAIL FOR WAR CRIMES:

After having been acquitted three times in past years by a local court, former member of the Karlovac special police Mihajlo Hrastov was found guilty by the Croatian Supreme Court of killing 13 and wounding two JNA reservists on a bridge outside Karlovac in September 1991, and sentenced to 8 years in prison. The case dates back to 1992 when the Karlovac County Court acquitted Hrastov, and the Supreme Court then returned the case for re-trial due to some unexplained circumstances. The re-trial began in 2000 and hearings were regularly attended by numerous locals who supported the defendant. Hrastov was acquitted a second time in 2002 and the Supreme Court again remanded the case to the Karlovac County Court. The county court acquitted Hrastov a third time in March 2007. The local Karlovac court noted that the killings happened "in dramatic circumstances" while the city was under bombardment. Finally, the Supreme Court decided to adjudicate the case itself, arguing it was apparent that the local court could not render a fair and impartial judgment. Hrastov now has the right to appeal the Supreme Court's guilty verdict, with a different panel of judges hearing the appeal. While the appeal is underway, Hrastov will held in detention, as is mandatory for any case with a sentence of more than 5 years. The press announced potential public protests, which might be held and organized by different war veteran organizations. (VDjukic)

12. (U) CROATIAN OFFICIALS REACT TO ICTY DECISION TO INCREASE  
SENTENCE IN WAR CRIMES CASE:

This week the ICTY Appeals Chamber announced its decision to increase the prison sentence for former JNA officer Veselin Sljivancanin from 5 to 17 years, while upholding the 20 year sentence for his commander, Mile Mrksic. Both were tried for the 1991 mass murder of 194 Croatian prisoners of war (POWs) on the Ovcara farm in Eastern Slavonia. The GOC, through a spokesperson, said that it welcomed the ICTY decision. In further remarks, both Prime Minister Sanader and Justice Minister Simonovic said that the decision to increase Sljivancanin's sentence and uphold Mrksic's was appropriate, but also argued that the appeals court did not go far enough.

Simonovic noted that prosecutors had not appealed the acquittal the final of the initial three defendants, and re-iterated Croatia's concern that the ICTY's case only covered the crimes committed in Ovcara and not all other crimes during the siege of Vukovar in 1991. Sanader, in his comments, also said he also felt that what took place in Vukovar has not been sanctioned adequately. Most media commentary echoed the official line. Even the leading Croatian Serb politician, Milorad Pupovac, said that the increase in Sljivancanin's sentence was a positive development for the victims. (VDjukic)

13. (U) CROATIA WORKS TOWARD A NATIONAL COUNTERPROLIFERATION  
STRATEGY:

The U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency hosted a "NATO Advance Training Course" in Split, May 4-8 that was well-attended by representatives from all of Croatia's Ministries and State Offices involved in combating WMD proliferation. Representatives from the U.S. Department of Defense, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security, along with a number of their international counterparts, presented a series of lectures and exercises designed to highlight issues in interagency cooperation and communication. The course should give a significant boost to Croatia's efforts to develop a draft national strategy on counterproliferation. (CRhoton)

14. (U) REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON REDUCING CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS AND MUNITIONS STOCKPILES:

On May 6-7, the State Department's Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs hosted a two-day conference in Zagreb to help develop a regional approach to the reduction of conventional weapons and munitions stockpiles in South East Europe. Participants at the workshop included defense officials from numerous South East European countries, representatives of the Departments of State and Defense, the U.S. European Command, and technical and policy experts from international organizations. Among the topics discussed included the threats posed by hazardous and loosely secured stockpiles as well as best practices in stockpile security and management. The details of the discussions at the workshop will be reported by septel. (PD'Amico)

15. US EMBASSY HOSTS COORDINATION MEETING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS:

On May 5, the Embassy hosted a coordination meeting to bring

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together donor community representatives and Croatian officials with responsibilities for law enforcement issues. The largest donors -- including the EC, UNDP, US, and several EU member states -- met with police and prosecutors to discuss upcoming plans and ways to help Croatia continue reform of its judicial and law enforcement sectors. The head of the Office for Suppression of Organized Crime and Corruption (USKOK) told donors that Croatia is not reforming because it is required for EU membership, but because it will improve the safety and security of Croatian citizens. As a result of the coordination meeting, the U.S. Embassy is creating a web-based users group for participants to share information about upcoming programs, availability of visiting speakers or trainers, and useful contact information. (CZimmer)  
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